



Eur päisches Pat ntamt
Eur p an Pat nt Office
Offic européen des brev ts

11 Publication number:

0 122 088
A1

12

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

21 Application number: 84302150.2

51 Int. Cl.: C 30 B 23/06

22 Date of filing: 29.03.84

30 Priority: 30.03.83 GB 8308786

71 Applicant: VG INSTRUMENTS GROUP LIMITED,
29 Brighton Road, Crawley West Sussex RH10 6AE (GB)

43 Date of publication of application: 17.10.84
Bulletin 84/42

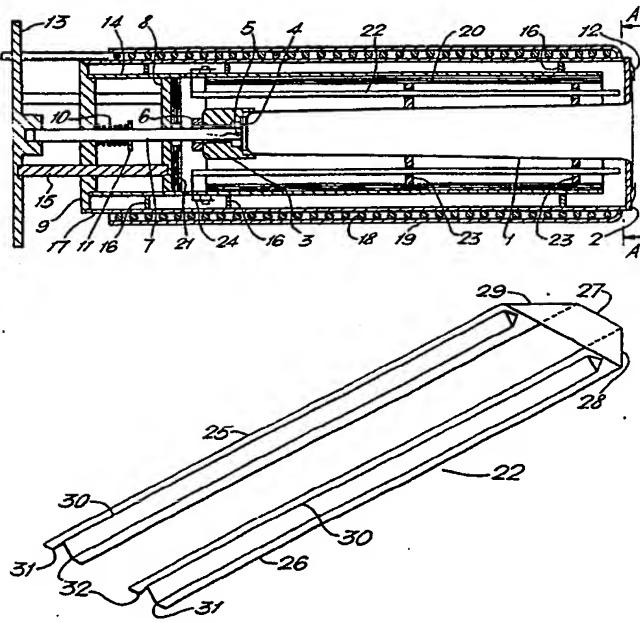
72 Inventor: Stonestreet, Paul Richard, Sheldon Franfield
Road, Buxted East Sussex (GB)
Inventor: Butcher, Peter John Lenard, Theale Crowhurst
Road, Lingfield Surrey (GB)
Inventor: Williams, David, 3 The Meads Camden Park,
Tunbridge Wells Kent (GB)
Inventor: Anderson, Kenneth, St. Albans Franfield Road,
Buxted East Sussex (GB)

84 Designated Contracting States: DE FR GB

74 Representative: Tomlinson, Kerry John et al, Frank B.
Dehn & Co. European Patent Attorneys Imperial
House 15-19 Kingsway, London WC2B 6UZ (GB)

54 Improvements in or relating to sources used in molecular beam epitaxy.

57 A molecular or atomic beam source for use in molecular beam epitaxy comprises a hollow cylindrical crucible (1) which is heated by an electric current passed through heating elements (22) comprising several thin elongate metal strips (25, 26) disposed outside of and spaced apart from the crucible and mounted parallel to its axis. The strips (25, 26) are substantially self supporting and preferably arranged in pairs linked conductively at the open end of the crucible and mounted on supporting brackets (24) at the other end. This method of construction substantially eliminates contact of the elements (22) with parts of the source other than the supporting brackets (24), which reduces contamination of the vacuum system at high source temperatures. This effect, and the efficient heating produced by the elements (22) described, allows the source to be operated at higher temperatures than previously known sources, permitting the production of high intensity molecular beams from materials such as iron and silicon as well as lower melting point materials such as gallium, arsenic and phosphorus.



IMPROVEMENTS IN OR RELATING TO SOURCES USED IN
MOLECULAR BEAM EPITAXY

This invention relates to the production of thin crystalline films of certain materials on a substrate of a different material under precisely controlled conditions, which is an important aspect of the

5 manufacture of semiconductor electronic devices such as integrated circuits and transistors for use at U.H.F. and microwave frequencies. The composition, thickness, and uniformity of the deposited layers largely determines the performance of devices manufactured in

10 this way, and it is consequently important to be able to control these parameters accurately during the deposition process, both for production and research purposes. Several techniques for depositing thin films are known, but that known as Molecular Beam Epitaxy is

15 one of the most precise and versatile. It involves the growth of epitaxial (single crystal) films from directed thermal energy molecular or atomic beams on a crystalline substrate in ultra high vacuum (less than 10^{-9} torr). An important feature of the process is

20 clearly the production of atomic or molecular beams of the substances to be deposited, and this invention is concerned with the type of source known as a Knudsen Source. In their simplest form these consist of a crucible of 10 - 40 ccs. capacity enclosed in a small

25 oven, into which a sample of the required material is placed so that it can be inserted into the vacuum system and vaporized in a controlled way to produce the atomic or molecular beam. The mouth of the crucible is often restricted by an orifice which has a diameter less than

30 the mean free path of the molecules at the pressure in the vacuum system. This results in the production of an atomic or molecular beam in which the direction of motion of the molecules is collimated in one direction,

and in which the number of intermolecular or interatomic collisions is minimized. Knudsen sources are conventionally used for the production of atomic or molecular beams of arsenic, gallium, phosphorus, 5 antimony, indium, manganese, germanium, tin, zinc sulphide, lead telluride, and other similar materials.

A conventional Knudsen source consists of a crucible into which a solid sample of the material is introduced, and a heater capable of raising the 10 temperature of the crucible to between 350°C and 1400°C, dependent on the material to be vaporized. A remotely controlled shutter of a refractory metal such as tantalum is often fitted over the mouth of the crucible to prevent the escape of the molecular beam when it is 15 not required. The entire source is mounted in an ultra high vacuum apparatus, and has to be constructed with this in mind. The materials used must be such that even at 1400°C they do not produce significant amounts of vapour either from the decomposition of the source 20 materials themselves, or from the the expulsion of other materials such as water absorbed into the source before it was fitted into the vacuum system. Any such contamination emitted from the source when it is heated will be detrimental to the purity of the thin film 25 deposited from the source, as well as reducing the vacuum that can be attained in the apparatus. Great care is therefore necessary in the design and construction of these sources to minimize the amount of contamination which reaches the substrate on which the layer is being 30 deposited. Generally, the crucible is made from pyrolytic boron nitride (typically 99.999% pure) or from spectroscopically pure graphite, and the heating elements from pure tantalum wire which is helically wound round the crucible. Several heat shields made from 35 tantalum foil may be wound over the heater, and the entire source is often surrounded by a cooling shroud

which prevents heat escaping from the source and heating other parts of the vacuum system, as well as condensing any contaminating material vaporized from the crucible walls or the heater. A restricting orifice may also be fitted to the mouth of the crucible as described above. Knudsen sources constructed in this way are known, and are briefly described in UK patent application 2,012,818 A and UK patent 1,469,978.

An alternative form of construction is to employ a heater consisting of tantalum wires running parallel to the axis of the crucible. These wires are conventionally enclosed in alumina tubes to support them when they are heated. Sources constructed in this way are more suited to use at lower temperatures, for the reasons described below. Both these forms of construction suffer from important disadvantages because the area of contact between the wire and the crucible is low, and the heat transfer from the wire to the crucible is inefficient. This requires the temperature of the heating wire to be considerably higher than the required temperature of the crucible, which increases the contamination emitted from the heater and its supports, and limits the maximum temperature to which the crucible can be heated without premature failure of the heater. The large proportion of waste heat radiated from a source of this kind also increases the demands on the cooling system for the source shroud. If the heating wire is spaced away from the source wall, as for example, in the alternative form of construction, the efficiency of the heat transfer falls still further, and the problems of supporting the heating element are increased. In the example given above, alumina tubes are employed. However, the heating wire will be in contact with these tubes, and because its temperature has to be considerably higher than that of the crucible, the contamination emitted from the source will be correspondingly increased. For this

reason, sources constructed in this way are more suited to use at lower temperatures. The use of pyrolytic boron nitride tubes to enclose the heating elements would reduce the amount of contamination, but it is a very 5 expensive material, and the cost of the source would be greatly increased. A further disadvantage is that a heater formed in this way usually contains a number of sharp bends in the wire, which are likely to result in its premature failure. Replacement of the wire is also 10 difficult. The use of a helically wound element on the crucible does not eliminate the requirement for support insulators in contact with the wire because the expansion of the wire when it is heated would result in it becoming slack on the crucible and moving out of 15 position unless additional supports are provided. These increase the amount of contamination, as discussed above. The use of a helically wound element also introduces another disadvantage, namely the existence of a cyclic temperature gradient along the axis of the 20 crucible with the points of maximum temperature at the points where the wire element is in contact with the crucible wall. This is emphasised by the relatively poor thermal conductivity of pyrolytic boron nitride.

However, the most serious defect affecting both 25 types of source is the fall in temperature at the mouth of the crucible due to the greater heat loss by radiation from the end of the crucible which cannot be enclosed by the heating element. This problem is increased when the mouth is restricted to produce true 30 Knusden evaporation. The effective evaporation temperature of the source is clearly the lowest temperature in it, because material evaporated at higher temperatures will condense at this point. The fall in temperature at the mouth means that the bulk of the 35 crucible must be heated to a still higher temperature than that needed to evaporate the contents to avoid

condensation in the mouth, and to maintain the desired flux of atoms or molecules. This defect further limits the effective maximum temperature of the source. In some cases it becomes so severe that it is necessary to

5 remove the restriction in the mouth of the source in order to achieve adequate deposition rates. A wide-mouthed source of this type does not behave as a true Knudsen source, and the atomic or molecular beams produced are not as well collimated, resulting in a

10 greater spread of the beam and a consequent reduction in the deposition rate on the substrate and a corresponding increase in the contamination of the rest of the vacuum system. However, up to now it has been necessary to tolerate these defects in order to produce a molecular

15 beam at the desired temperature, and many sources for molecular beam epitaxy are designed without the narrow orifice because of the difficulty of heating the end plate which would contain it. Some improvement can be made in the case of a helically wound heater by

20 decreasing the pitch of the turns at the mouth of the crucible, which increases the heat input at this point and reduces the fall in temperature. However, this necessarily means that the pitch of the turns round the remainder of the crucible is greater, and this again

25 limits the maximum temperature as well as worsening the temperature gradient between the turns inherent with a helical heater. In practice, a combination of these problems limits the maximum working temperature of conventional sources to about 1300 to 1400°C, which

30 means that they cannot be used to produce beams of silicon or iron, and are not particularly satisfactory with germanium. If a source operating with true Knudsen evaporation is used, its maximum effective temperature may well be lower than 1300°C.

35 It is an object of the present invention, therefore, to provide a Knudsen source for molecular

beam epitaxy in which these difficulties are overcome, which results in deposited layers of greater purity and uniformity, and which can be used at higher temperatures than conventional sources so that, for example, beams of

5 silicon and iron can be produced without the need for expensive processes like electron beam heating. It is a further object to provide a source in which the crucible can easily be changed in case of damage, or substituted for one of a different volume, without substantial

10 changes to the rest of the source, and one in which the heating elements are robust and easily changed in case of failure. It is also an object of the present invention to provide a heating element for a Knusden source which can produce a higher heat input to a

15 particular part or parts of the crucible than to the remainder, so that the temperature gradient along the source can be adjusted, usually to minimise it, therefore allowing the construction of a source capable of true Knusden evaporation at higher temperatures than

20 previously possible.

Thus the invention consists of a molecular or atomic beam source for use in molecular beam epitaxy comprising a hollow crucible open at one end, and one or more crucible heating elements characterized in that

25 each said element comprises a plurality of thin substantially parallel elongate metal strips formed in such a way as to be substantially self supporting and disposed outside of and spaced apart from the said crucible with major surfaces facing said crucible, said

30 strips being electrically connected together at one end and supported from the other end by insulated electrically conductive supporting means in such a way that an electrical current can be passed through all said strips via supply leads connected only at the said

35 electrically conductive supporting means, and said elements being disposed such that substantially the only

parts of said source contacted by said strips are said supporting means. In this way the efficiency of heating of the crucible is improved and its operating temperature is increased whilst simultaneously the

5 unwanted heating of other parts of the source which might otherwise produce contamination of the molecular beam produced is minimized. Preferably each of said elements comprises a pair of elongate metal strips extending parallel to the axis of the crucible, attached

10 to electrically conductive mounting brackets at one end and electrically connected together at the other end by a conductive link. The mounting brackets are attached to supporting insulators, and the electrical supply is connected to the brackets. Preferably also the metal

15 strips are made from a refractory metal such as tantalum. It is necessary to keep the current through the elements to a minimum to reduce problems such as unwanted heating of the supply leads and electrical feedthroughs which would occur at a high current, so

20 that the cross sectional area of the strips must be reduced to a minimum. The strips ought, however, to present the maximum possible surface area to the crucible to ensure efficient heating, and consequently they should be very thin. It has therefore been

25 considered impractical to use strips which are sufficiently thick as to be self supporting when mounted from one end as envisaged in the invention, because the current required to heat them would be unacceptably high.

30 Therefore the invention further consists of a heating element for use in a molecular or atomic beam source characterized in that it is constructed from at least one elongate strip of a refractory metal having a width much greater than its thickness, said elongate

35 strip being folded along one or more lines parallel to its longest edge whereby the resistance of the strip to

bending is increased. Preferably, if more than one fold is provided, subsequent adjacent folds are made in opposite directions so that a corrugated strip of overall width greater than its overall thickness is 5 produced. However, it is also within the scope of the invention to fabricate a thin walled hollow tube of rectangular, circular, or elliptical section from a thin strip in order to produce a self supporting element.

By the use of an essentially flat metallic strip 10 in place of the conventional heater wire, the surface area of the heating element radiating the crucible is greatly increased, and the efficiency of heat transfer to the crucible is improved. The strips, although thin, are very robust and easily handled, especially when 15 folded in the way described. The greater efficiency of radiation of the crucible raises the maximum operating temperature of the crucible, typically to 1800°C, which allows the source to be used with iron and silicon, as well as greatly increasing the maximum deposition rates 20 of metals such as aluminium and gallium. The increased uniformity of radiation of the crucible also reduces the temperature gradients along the axis which are sometimes formed when spirally wound heaters are used. The use of heating elements which are substantially self supporting 25 minimizes the area of contact between the elements themselves and their supports, preventing excessive heating of the supports and the consequent emission of contamination, as well as facilitating replacement of the elements. The reduced heating of the supporting 30 insulators is of particular importance because a source constructed according to the invention can be used at higher temperatures than a conventional source. Further, the use of substantially self supporting elements which are mounted only at one end overcomes the problem of 35 mounting the elements in a way which allows for their considerable increase in length when heated without the

need for additional supporting insulators in contact with the element. It may however still be necessary to provide some additional restraining means, particularly at the end of the element remote from the supports, to 5 ensure that the element cannot touch the crucible wall or the cooled surround. A slot cut in a suitable insulator such as pyrolytic boron nitride, is usually sufficient. When a corrugated or folded element is used, the area of contact between the element and the sides of 10 such a slot will be very small, and the insulator will not be excessively heated.

The folding of the elements should be done so that adequate rigidity is obtained whilst the maximum possible surface area is presented to the crucible wall. 15 Dependent on the dimensions of the element material and its length, one fold in the centre of the strip at approximately 90° may be sufficient, and if the strip is positioned with the fold away from the crucible and its surfaces inclined at 45° to a tangent at the crucible 20 surface, efficient radiation will be obtained.

When greater rigidity is required, additional folds can be made as explained, preferably in opposite directions to the centre fold, and symmetrically placed about it. This results in a corrugated element which can 25 be positioned as though it were a thick strip to ensure maximum radiation of the crucible. A less preferred method is to form the strip into a thin walled tube or box section, held together, for example, by spot welding. However, this method does not radiate the 30 crucible as efficiently as the previous one, especially if a circular cross section is used, although it does result in an element of great strength. In all cases, the support brackets should preferably be fabricated with the same shape in cross section as the folded 35 element, and good electrical connection can then be assured by clamping the element strip between two rigid

shaped brackets and either spot welding or bolting the assembly together. The shaped brackets also help to maintain the correct shape of the folded element.

In general, the elements, each comprising a number of elongate strips (usually two) should be symmetrically disposed around the crucible, and the spacing between the strips arranged to be approximately equal. A sufficient number of strips should be used to ensure that the gap between adjacent strips is not so large that the uniformity of heating is reduced. The number used will be dependent on the overall width of each strip and the diameter of the crucible. Typically four elements each comprising two strips about 10 mm wide are sufficient for a crucible about 25 mm diameter.

It will be appreciated that each element need not be limited to two strips; for example, four strips may be connected at their unsupported ends by a single conductive link, and at the supporting brackets two of the strips may be connected together and to one of the electrical supply leads, and the remaining two connected together and to the other supply lead. However, this arrangement results in different currents flowing in different parts of the conductive link at the unsupported end of the strips, and in general elements constructed from only two strips are preferred.

In the arrangements described the conductive links joining the elongate strips which constitute each element may also form part of that element and contribute to the heat emitted from it, so that the heat input to the crucible in the region of the conductive strips can be increased above that obtainable with the strips alone due to the greater area of heated element in that region. This feature of the invention is especially useful if the links are positioned at the ends of the strips close to the open end of the crucible. In this case the greater heat output from the

element in the region of the links can be used to compensate for the greater heat losses from the open end of the crucible, consequently overcoming the limitations of conventional sources described earlier. The links 5 are preferably made from the same material as the rest of the element, and are preferably formed integrally with the strips, but, if a different degree of heating is required in the link region, they may be made from a different material, and/or with a different cross-sectional area. However, when the links are made from 10 the same material as the element, it is possible to make an element assembly consisting of two folded strips by simply taking a long piece of the corrugated strip, flattening out the corrugations at the point where the 15 link is to join the ends of the individual strips, and twice folding the strip across its wide surface at lines at approximately 45° to its long axis to form a U shaped element with a link section at 90° to two parallel strips. Alternatively, the link section can be 20 made from a separate piece of element material clamped or spot welded to the ends of the strips.

It is also possible to fabricate a self supporting element which incorporates additional heating at the open end of the crucible from a sheet of foil. The foil 25 is first corrugated by folding it along parallel lines and then cut so that the completed element consists of the required number of individual strips each linked to adjacent strips at opposite ends, i.e. so the path of the element resembles a rectangular wave. Support 30 brackets are fitted to the lower links, and the element is formed into a cylinder which surrounds the crucible. The electrical supply leads are connected to the lower ends of the strips at the outside edges of the sheet of foil, so that the individual strips are connected in 35 series. However, an element formed in this way is more difficult to replace than an element formed from two

strips, and additional unwanted heat is radiated by the connecting links at the lower end of the crucible.

Some examples of the invention will now be described in greater detail with reference to the 5 accompanying drawings, in which:

figure 1 is a general sectional view of a source constructed according to the invention;

figure 2 is a sectional view taken along the plane A-A in figure 1;

10 figure 3 is a view of a folded self supporting element comprising two individual strips suitable for use in the source shown in figure 1;

figure 4 is a view of a supporting bracket assembly suitable for use with the element shown in figure 3;

15 figure 5 shows schematically how the elements shown in figure 3 may be arranged round the crucible in the complete source;

figure 6 shows how the mouth of the crucible can be restricted to produce true Knusden evaporation; and

20 figure 7 shows how a complete element suitable for use in the invention can be fabricated from a single piece of material.

Referring first to figure 1, which has been expanded in the radial direction for the sake of 25 clarity, the crucible 1 is preferably of about 40ccs capacity and is made from 99.999% pure pyrolytic boron nitride or from spectroscopically pure graphite. It is supported at its open end by tantalum flange 2, and its lower end is a sliding fit in a large counterbore in 30 graphite cylinder 3. At the bottom of this large counterbore is another counterbore which contains a tantalum disc 4, which is in good thermal contact with the bottom of crucible 1. A tungsten-rhenium thermocouple 5 is attached to disc 4 in order to monitor 35 the temperature at the bottom of crucible 1. Cylinder 3 and disc 4 are held in position by means of bush 6 which

is secured to thermocouple mounting tube 7. Tube 7 runs through clearance holes in supporting flanges 8 and 9, and is spring loaded by compression spring 10 acting against bush 11 on tube 7. Spring 10 pushes cylinder 3 and crucible 1 towards flange 2, but the rim of crucible 1 is prevented from moving away from flange 2 by means of clips 12, so that spring 10 effectively maintains disc 4 in contact with the base of crucible 1. Tube 7, bush 6, and flanges 8 and 9 are preferably made of molybdenum. The leads of thermocouple 5 (not shown) pass inside tube 7 and are connected to electrical feedthroughs on flange 13 which is used to mount the entire source in the vacuum system. Support flanges 8 and 9 are mounted inside support tube 14, preferably made of tantalum. Three molybdenum rods 15 are screwed into flange 8, pass through flange 9, and are secured in bushes on flange 13, securing the source to mounting flange 13. Tube 14 carries three circular flanges 16 on its outer surface which support another tantalum tube 17. Flange 2 is attached to the end of tube 17 to support the mouth of the crucible. A spiral coil of stainless steel tubing 18 is wound over tube 17, and this is enclosed by another tube 19. This is spun over at the end to locate tube 19 on tube 17. The ends of the tube forming coil 18 are taken through flange 13 to allow a coolant to be circulated through it. Generally, water is used as a coolant, but in some cases, liquid nitrogen may be preferred.

The inside of tube 14 is lined with a number of cylindrical radiation shields 20 (usually 4) which are spaced apart by thin tantalum pads sandwiched between them. The radiation shields are preferably made from tantalum foil and are secured inside tube 14 by a number of tantalum spring clips. More radiation shields in the form of thin tantalum discs 21 are fitted on flange 8. As many as 20 discs may be used.

Each heating element, generally indicated by 22, is mounted on two supporting brackets 24, which are attached to insulated mountings on support tube 14. Elements 22 are made from tantalum foil, typically 10mm 5 wide and 0.0125mm thick. As shown in figure 3, they consist of two strips of foil 25 and 26 which are joined at one end by a conductive link 27. This may consist of a separate piece of electrically conductive metal which is firmly attached to the ends of the strips, ensuring a 10 low resistance joint, but preferably it should consist of a piece of the same tantalum foil which is used to make the strips. In this case the link 27 serves to radiate heat just as the remainder of the element, and the heat output from the whole assembly is therefore 15 greater in the region of the link than elsewhere because of the greater surface area of heated element in this region. This feature is used to increase heat output of the element close to the open end of the crucible by positioning the link end of the element close to the 20 open end of the crucible. The temperature of the open end of the crucible can therefore be maintained at or above the temperature at its closed end, in spite of the greater heat losses from the open end. Construction of the element is also facilitated when link 27 is made 25 from tantalum foil because the complete element comprising strips 25 and 26 and link 27 can be made simply by folding a single length of foil along lines 28 and 29 to form the U shaped element shown in figure 3. The free ends of strips 25 and 26 are then attached to 30 mounting brackets 24 by clamping or spot welding so that the element can be mounted on insulators fixed to support tube 14 as described.

As previously explained, the foil strip from which the elements are made is very thin, and some 35 additional strengthening of the strips 25 and 26 is required to make the element self supporting. This is

most conveniently achieved by folding the strip along its centre line 30 and further folding along lines 31 and 32 in the opposite direction to the first fold. This results in each strip having a corrugated cross section, 5 as shown in figure 3, which imparts considerable rigidity to the element. Link section 27 should preferably remain flat, but this is not essential. This method of folding allows the elements to present a large surface area to the surface of the crucible whilst 10 making them essentially self supporting.

In order to maintain the elements in the corrugated form shown in figure 3, it is preferable to form at least part of the supporting brackets 24 with the same cross sectional shape as the element corrugation. Figure 15 4 shows an exploded view of a bracket assembly where this has been done. The end of each strip of foil 25 is clamped between the shaped bracket 24 and a flat plate 33, and the whole assembly is firmly spot welded together. Bracket 24 and plate 33 are preferably made of 20 molybdenum. The strip 25 may also be spot welded to the bracket 24 on the folded central part to ensure that the element is maintained in its corrugated form. Alternatively, plate 33 could be shaped to fit into the fold of bracket 24.

25 In the source illustrated in figures 1 and 2, four heating elements 22 are symmetrically disposed around crucible 1, as indicated schematically in figure 5. The lengths of the strips 25 and 26 should be such as to ensure that the link 27 is positioned as close as 30 possible to flange 2 (figure 1), making allowance for the considerable increase of length of the elements when heated. This ensures that the entire length of the crucible is heated.

Although the elements are substantially self 35 supporting, it is advisable to provide some additional restraining means to ensure that the link end of the

element, remote from the mounting brackets, cannot accidentally contact the crucible wall or the radiation shields 20. The restraining means may conveniently take the form of a disc or discs of insulating material 5 containing four large circular slots, such as 23 in figures 1 and 2. Each element 22 passes through one of the slots, and the corrugations in the strips ensure that there is only minimal contact between the element and the insulator, even if the element is displaced from 10 its proper position far enough to make contact with the insulator. Insulators 23 are preferably made from pyrolytic boron nitride, and are secured by dimples raised in the inner sheet of the radiation shields 20. The electrical supply leads (not shown) for the heating 15 elements are attached to brackets 24.

When the elements are fitted to the source, the position of the brackets 24 is adjusted so that the link section 27 is curved slightly, and the entire element passes through the slot in insulator 23 without 20 contacting the sides of the slot, as shown in figure 2.

As previously explained, other methods of imparting rigidity to the elements other than the method of folding shown in figure 3 may be used. In some cases, a single fold, resulting in a V shaped strip, may be 25 sufficient, or the strip may be folded to form a closed circular or rectangular cross section, with the edges joined together by spot welding. However, elements formed in this way, which are essentially thin walled tubes, are not as efficient as a folded strip because a 30 smaller proportion of the surface area of the element directly radiates the crucible.

It will be appreciated from the foregoing description that each heating element preferably comprises two strips and is supported only at two 35 points, namely the supporting brackets 24 on each strip. The replacement of a failed element is therefore

straightforward, and can be done simply by removing the outer shielding of the source. In addition, it will be seen from figure 1 that the crucible 1 can be removed for replacement or cleaning simply by releasing the 5 spring clips 12 on flange 2, without any further dismantling. This is a very important advantage of the present invention in comparison with prior art Knusden sources in which the heating wire is often wound on the crucible itself.

10 If it is desired to restrict the mouth of the crucible in order to ensure true Knusden evaporation, then the method of construction illustrated in figure 6 can be used. A substantially pure graphite plug 34 with a smaller orifice 35, selected to ensure true Knusden 15 evaporation, is fitted in the mouth of crucible 1 and maintained in position in the hole in flange 2 by springs 12. The heat losses from the end of plug 34 are reduced by several tantalum heat shields 36 which are spaced apart by tantalum pads. Use of these shields, and 20 elements constructed according to figure 3, ensures that the temperature of the graphite plug can be maintained close to that of the crucible, minimizing the problems encountered with conventional Knusden sources operated at high temperature.

25 Figure 7 illustrates the fabrication from a sheet of foil of a self supporting element 37 which incorporates additional heating at the open end of the crucible. The foil is first corrugated by folding it along the dotted lines (some of which are shown in 30 figure 7) and then cut into the shape shown in the figure so that the completed element consists of the required number of individual strips 25, 26 etc, each linked to adjacent strips at opposite ends. Support brackets are fitted to the lower links, and the element 35 is formed into a cylinder which surrounds the crucible. The electrical supply leads are connected to the lower

0122088

18

ends of the strips at the outside edges of the sheet of foil, so that the individual strips are connected in series.

CLAIMS

1. A molecular or atomic beam source for use in molecular beam epitaxy comprising a hollow crucible (1) open at one end, and one or more crucible heating elements (22) characterized in that each said element 5 comprises a plurality of thin substantially parallel elongate metal strips (25,26) formed in such a way as to be substantially self supporting and disposed outside of and spaced apart from the said crucible with major surfaces facing said crucible, said strips being 10 electrically connected together at one end and supported from the other end by insulated electrically conductive supporting means in such a way that an electrical current can be passed through all said strips via supply leads connected only at the said electrically conductive 15 supporting means, and said elements being disposed such that substantially the only parts of said source contacted by said strips are said supporting means.

2. A molecular or atomic beam source as in claim 1 in which each of said elements (22) comprises a pair of 20 elongate metal strips (25,26) extending parallel to the axis of said crucible (1), attached at one end to electrically conductive mounting brackets (24) to which an electrical supply is connected and electrically connected together at the other end by a conductive link 25 (27).

3. A molecular or atomic beam source according to claim 2 in which said conductive link (27) forms part of said element (22) and contributes to the heat emitted from said element, and in which said elements are 30 disposed so that said at least some of said conductive links are adjacent to said crucible (1) at its open end.

4. A molecular or atomic beam source according to claim 3 in which said conductive link (27) is integrally formed with said strips (25,26).

5. A molecular or atomic beam source according to claim 4 in which only one said element (37) is provided, said element comprising a plurality of parallel strips (25,26) formed from a single sheet of foil, each strip 5 being linked to adjacent strips at opposite ends, said element being corrugated by folding along lines parallel to said strips and said element being disposed cylindrically about said crucible.

6. A molecular or atomic beam source according to 10 any of claims 1 to 5 in which said element (22) is made substantially from a refractory metal.

7. A heating element for use in a molecular or atomic beam source characterized in that it is constructed from at least one elongate metallic strip 15 (25,26) having a width much greater than its thickness, said elongate strip being folded along one or more lines parallel to its longest edge whereby the resistance of the strip to bending is increased.

8. A heating element according to claim 7 in which 20 more than one fold is provided, and in which adjacent folds are made in opposite directions so that a corrugated strip of overall width greater than its overall thickness is produced.

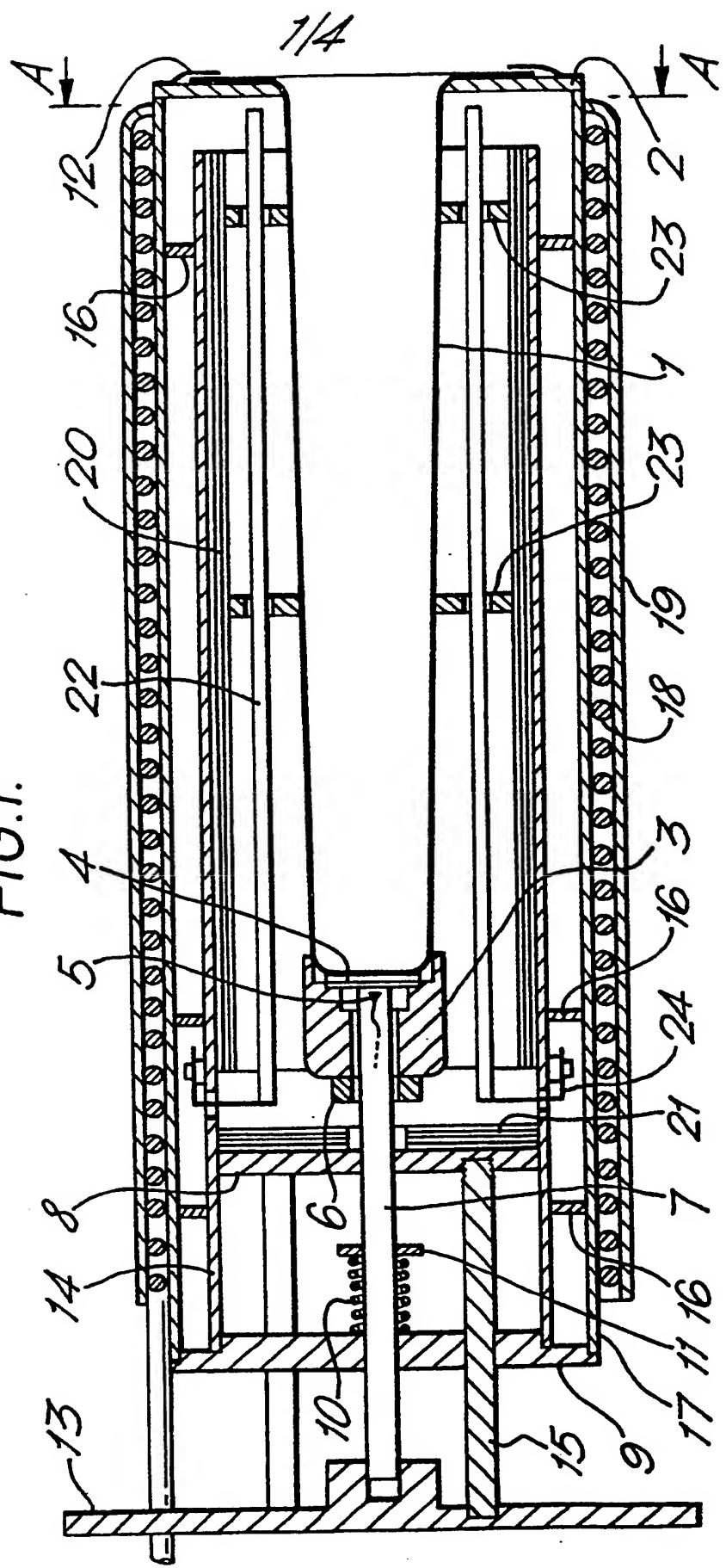
9. A heating element according to claim 7 in which 25 each said strip is folded or curved to fabricate a thin walled tube of circular, elliptical or rectangular section in order to produce a self supporting element.

10. A heating element according to claim 8 in which three folds are provided in each said strip, the first 30 fold substantially in the centre of said strip and the remaining two along lines disposed either side of said first fold and in the opposite direction to said first fold.

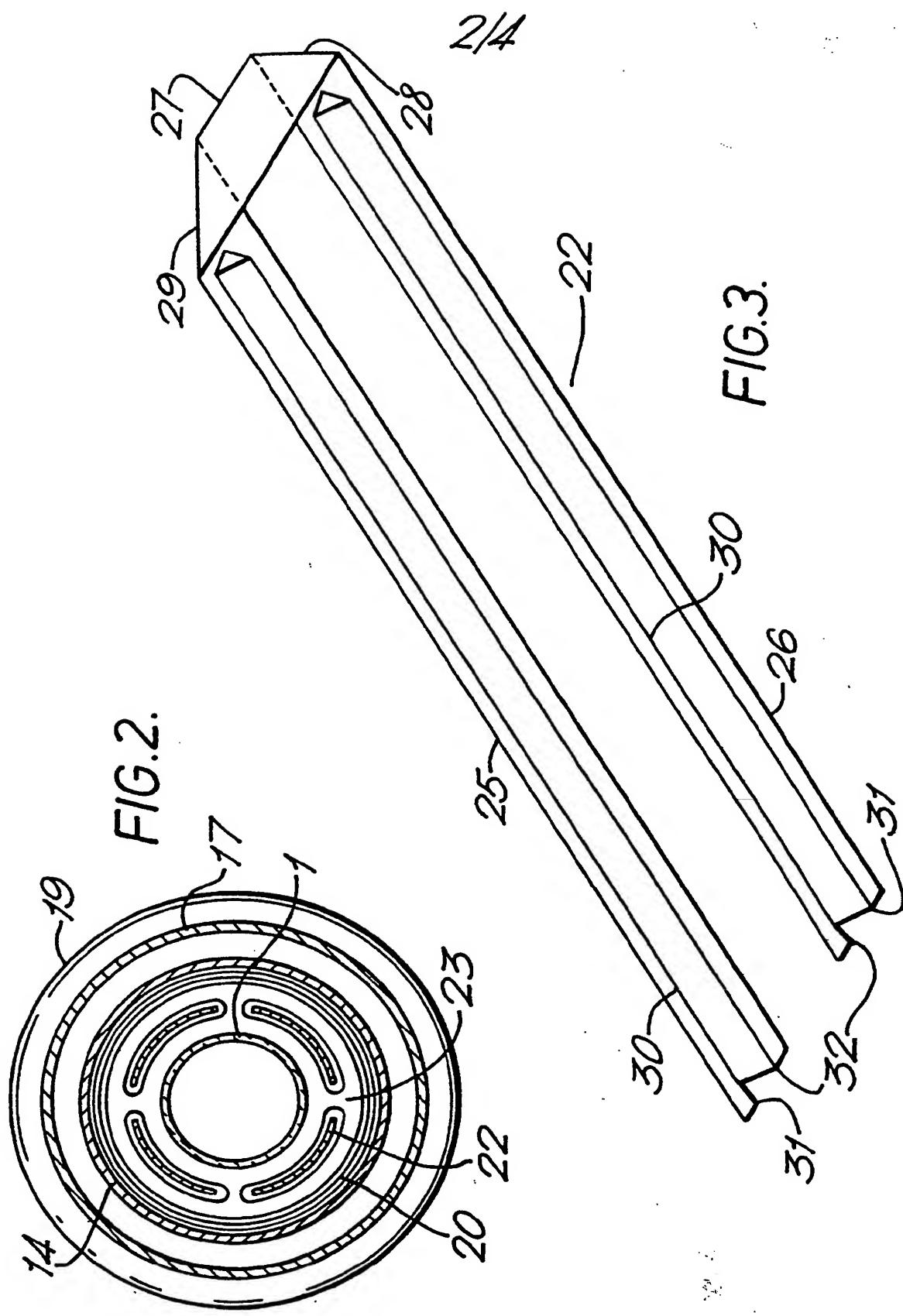
11. A heating element for a molecular or atomic 35 beam source according to any of claims 7 to 10 made substantially from a refractory metal.

0122088

FIG. 1.



0122088



0122088

3/4

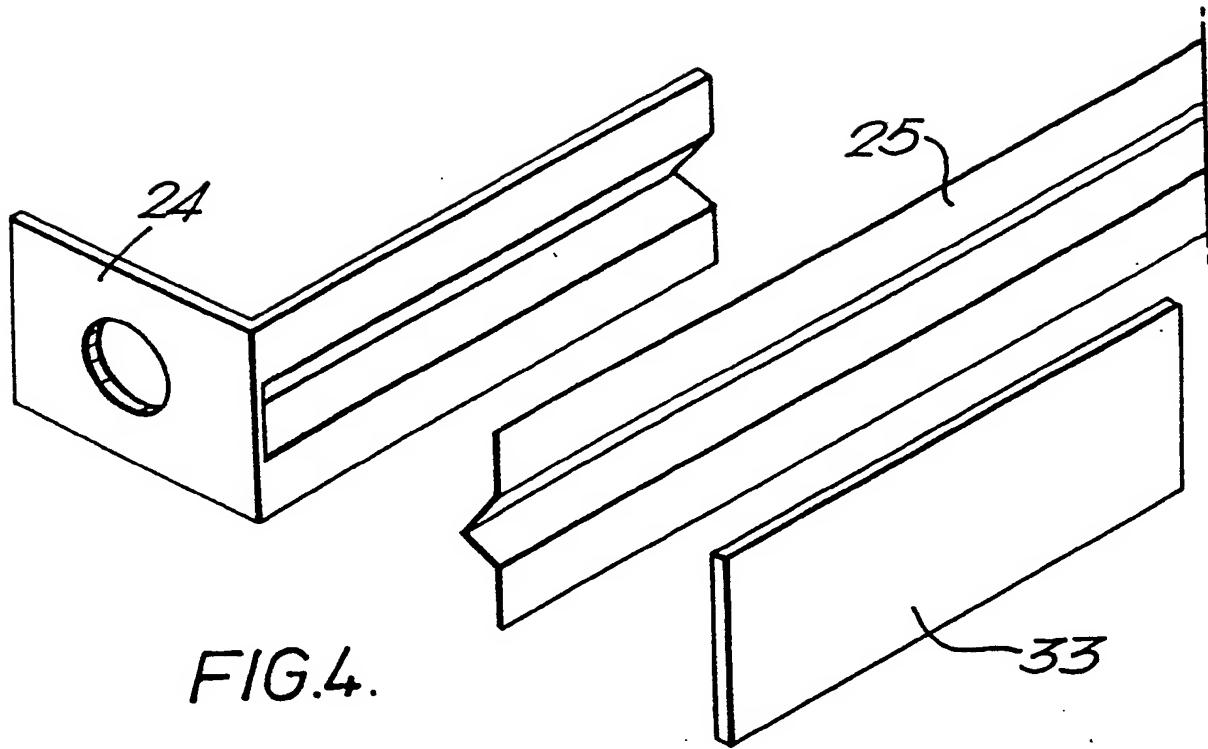
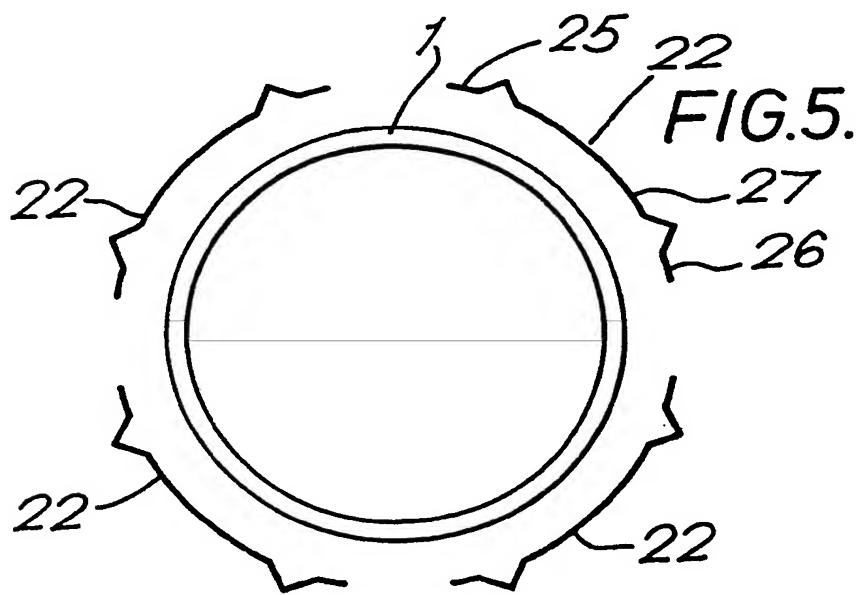


FIG.4.



4/4

FIG.6.

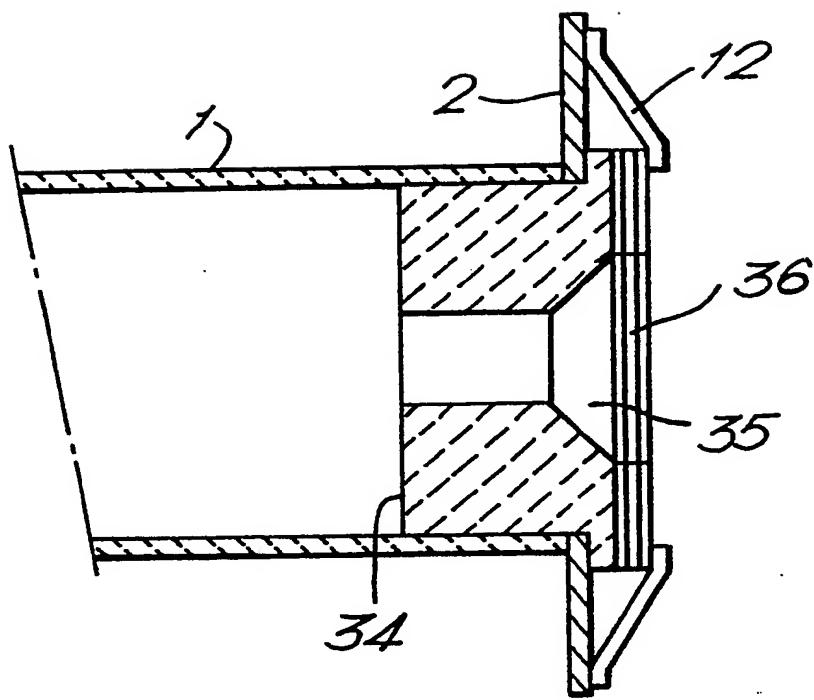
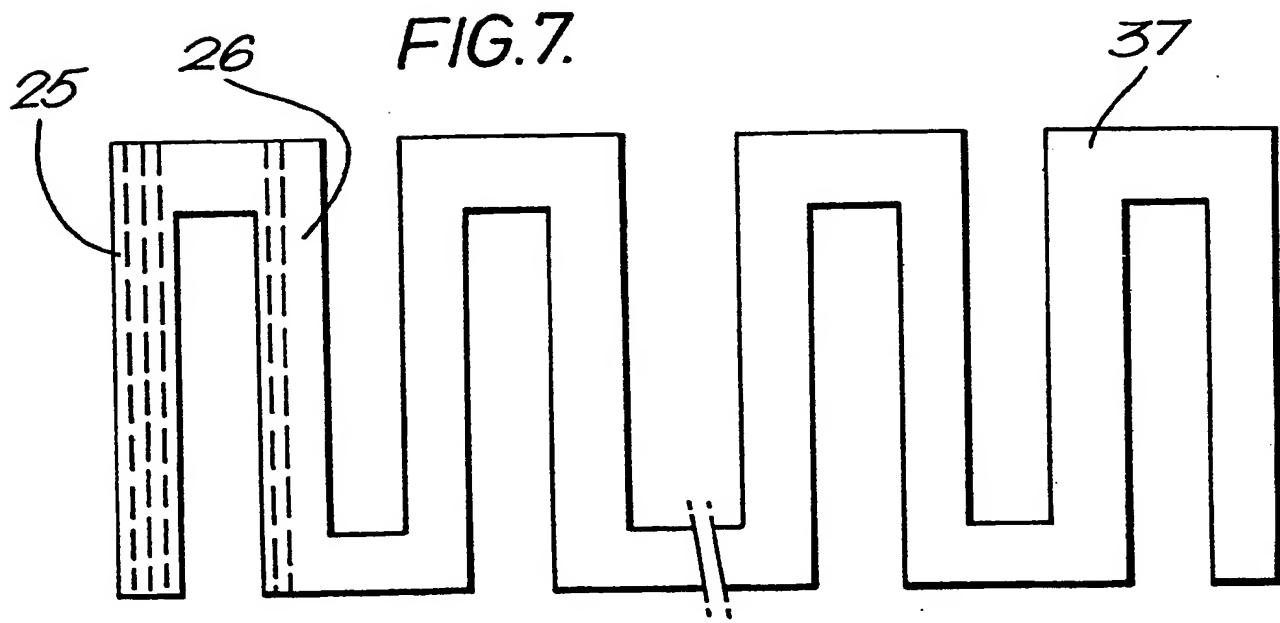


FIG.7.





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number

EP 84 30 2150

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. ³)
A	US-A-4 239 955 (A.Y. CHO) --- A US-A-3 104 178 (E.M. DA SILVA) -----		C 30 B 23/06
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. ³)
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE	Date of completion of the search 06-07-1984	Examiner BRACKE P.P.J.L.	
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			